



Autocourse Official Illustrated History of the Indianapolis 500: Revised and Updated Second Edition Includes Tribute to Dan Wheldon

Donald Davidson, Rick Shaffer

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THE Indianapolis "500" is much more than merely the best known automobile race in the world. It is a cherished time-honored institution with a glorious history dating back more than one hundred years.

Known to most as, quite simply, "The 500," it has been held every year since 1911, the only exceptions being 1917-18 and 1942-45, during the periods when America was involved in the two world wars.

Steeped in tradition, it has meant many things to many people and has played an enormous role in the lives of human beings, perhaps even more so for the spectators and devotees than for the participants themselves.

For over half a century, Memorial Day meant either trekking to the track or else ensuring that whatever other activity was planned for the day, a radio would always be within earshot. In more recent decades, settling down in front of the television has been added to the equation, while it is now the Sunday of Memorial Day weekend on which the extravaganza takes place, rather than on Memorial Day itself. But the feeling is the same.

For the participants, it has been a nearly 100-year saga of dreams, innovation, ingenuity, bravery, triumph, and tragedy. Paupers became millionaires, young men from small towns and broken homes became international celebrities, and regrettably, some of them gave their lives.

The "500" has endured world wars, depressions, recessions, political strife, and negative journalism, and yet it continues to draw massive passionate and emotional crowds, whose loyalty is rewarded with never-to-be-forgotten moments such as the finishes of 2006 and 2011, when Dan Wheldon snatched victory on literally the final turn.

This, then, is the story of the Indianapolis 500 and how it came to be. This is the story of more than 100 editions of the race, interspersed with a look at some of the compelling personalities, some little-known facts, an attempt to document the origins of some of the traditions, and perhaps even to dispel a few myths.

From Harroun to Franchitti, it's all here...

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George Chadwick:

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